THE MAKING OF MODERN AFRICA

A Guide to Archives

Compiled by CHRIS COOK

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THE MAKING OF MODERN AFRICA: A Guide to Archives

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgments iv

Preface v

The Guide to Archives 1

Select Bibliography 203

Indexes

Archive Index 204

Subject Index 212

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Much of the research for this book was done at a time when the archive scene in Africa was rapidly changing. In South Africa, for example, new centers devoted to the history of the ANC and the liberation struggle have now begun to develop. Inevitably, in addition to the many collections of papers cited in this volume, new sources will become available. Inevitably, also, the information in this volume will be subject to change.

I would like to appeal to all those who know of papers not included in this book (or of information that has changed since this book was published) to provide details for inclusion in subsequent editions of this work (c/o Chris Cook, Modern Archives Unit, London School of Economics).

Finally, I owe two deep debts of thanks. At the publishers I must thank Susan Schwartz and Drew Silver who guided this book through to publication. At the London School of Economics (my home, at different times, for nearly a quarter of a century) my debt is a wider one. Few institutions could have provided more admirable research facilities for compiling a book of this kind. I owe the LSE a tremendous debt.

Chris Cook
London School of Economics

PREFACE

The aim of this book is to bring together, from as wide a variety of geographical locations as possible, the archival information now available in over 1,000 collections of personal papers of value to the historian of modern Africa. Broadly speaking, the chronological bounds of this volume cover the period from the Congress of Berlin in 1878 (which perhaps marked the high water mark of the European imperial scramble for Africa) to the end of colonial rule in Africa a century later. This was symbolized in the 1980s by the final independence of Zimbabwe and Namibia (the last significant European possessions in Africa).

This volume has not attempted to describe the governmental and official archives of either the former colonial powers or the newly independent nations of Africa. These have already been extensively described and documented, not least through the invaluable surveys undertaken by UNESCO. Reference should be made to these published surveys in the bibliographical note at the end of this book. Rather, this volume has concentrated on the myriad private papers of those persons involved in the unfolding history of modern Africa. During the colonial era, these individuals might range from the imperial governors and viceroys to the senior colonial civil servants and military personnel serving in, for example, the British, French and Belgian empires. They also include public figures campaigning on issues associated with Africa—from the reform of the Belgian Congo and the advocacy of self-government, to the campaign against the evil of apartheid. Within Africa itself, the individuals included range from the leading figures in the black nationalist and pan-African movements to the white settlers of, for example, Kenya and Rhodesia. Full coverage is also given to South Africa, from the Boer supporters of Kruger to such politicians as Smuts and Malan.

It is hardly surprising that these papers are in geographically diverse locations. They are to be found throughout Europe and Africa, from famous national archives to humble local repositories. Particular mention should be made of such record centers as Rhodes House Library, Oxford, whose holdings constitute an invaluable source for the history of modern Africa (and much else besides).

In Africa itself recent political and economic developments have not helped the availability of archives. Political instability, one-party rule and military *coups* have gone hand in hand with worsening economic conditions. As a result, for large swathes of Africa, archive sources are at present either virtually nonexistent or inaccessible. Thus, in former Portuguese Africa, both Mozambique and Angola have been devastated by prolonged civil war. The former Belgian Congo (Zaire) has seen civil war, secession and the dictatorship of Mobutu. Few of the independent states of the former French Empire have a tradition of archival openness. There are even fewer available archival sources for Arab North Africa. Elsewhere Liberia is still engulfed in civil war, Ethiopia still recovering from the Marxist rule of Mengistu. In the former British colonies, the archival situation is also often bleak. Even where dictatorship or military rule have not totally prevailed (as in Zimbabwe or Kenya) economic recession has wrought havoc. Scarce resources have become even scarcer.

This situation, it is hoped, will change. Future editions of this book will aim to include an ever-growing corpus of personal archives from black Africa itself. For the present, however, the historian will have recourse as much to archives in Europe as to those in Africa. The contents of this volume reflect both this archival reality and the needs of the working historian.

ARCHIVE INDEX

Archive headings are listed in boldface.

A

Aberystwyth, Wales *see* National Library of Wales
Accra, Ghana *see* National Archives of Ghana
African Studies Centre (Cambridge, England)
Walker, Eric Anderson 189
Aigues-Vives commune (France)
Doumergue, Gaston 53
Algemeen Rijksarchief (The Hague, Netherlands)
Ameringen, E. A. van 5
Asselbergs, C. J. 7
Dornela Nieuwenhuis, Ferdinand Jacobus 52
Leyds, Dr. Willene Johannes 113
All Souls College (Oxford, England)
Malcolm, Sir Dougal Orme 126
Amsterdam, Netherlands *see* International Institute of Social History
Antwerp, Belgium *see* Archief en Museum voor het Vlaamse Cultuurleven
Archief en Museum voor het Vlaamse Cultuurleven (Antwerp, Belgium)
de Vleeschauwer, Albert 51
Van Eetvelde, Edmond 186
Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Quai d'Orsay) (Paris, France)
Barrère, Camille 12
Bourgeois, Léon 22
Cambon, Paul 29
Decrais, Albert-Pierre-Louis 47
Delcassé, Théophile 49
Develle, Jules 50
Doumergue, Gaston 53
Ferry, Jules 62
Freycinet, Charles 66
Gambetta, Léon 69
Hanotaux, Gabriel 82
Lebrun, Albert 111
Pichon, Stephen 150
Poincaré, Raymond 151
Ribot, Alexandre 159
Archives Départementales (France)
Aisne (Laon): Hanotaux, Gabriel 82
Aude (Carcassonne): Armengaud, Paul 6
Charente-Maritime: Combes, Emile 39
Drome: Loubet, Emile 117
Eure-et-Loire: Viollette, Maurice 188
Isère: Perrier, Léon 150
Marne: Bourgeois, Léon 22
Meuse: Develle, Jules 50
Pas-de-Calais: Jonnart, Charles 102
Puy-de-Dome: Clémentel, Etienne 36
Sarthe (Le Mans): Caillaux, Joseph 29
Archives Générales du Royaume (Brussels, Belgium)
Arendt, L. 6
Banning, Emile 10
Carton de Wiart, Henry 31
Forthomme, Pierre 64
Frère-Orban, H. J. W. 66
Greindl, Jules 76
Jaspar, Henri 98
Nothomb, Jean-Baptiste 141
Orts, Pierre 145
Van der Elst, Léon 185
Van Eetvelde, Edmond 186
Archives Nationales (Paris, France)
Baratier, Albert 11
Combes, Emile 39
de Gaulle, Charles 48
Delavignette, Robert 49
Diouf, Galandou 52
Duchêne, Albert 54
Faure, Félix 61
Ferry, Abel 62
Fourneau, Lucien 64
Gallieni, Joseph 69
Guy, Camille 78
Joseph, Gaston 102
Lebon, André-Jean-Louis 111
Lebrun, Albert 111
Lyautey, Louis Hubert Gonzalve 118
Mangin, Charles 126
Messimy, Adolphe 132
Noirot, Ernest 141
Paye, Lucien 148
Archives of the League of Nations (Geneva, Switzerland)
Pelt, Adrien 149
Archivio Centrale dello Stato (Rome, Italy)
Ameglio, Giovanni 5
Badoglio, Pietro 9
Brusati, Ugo 24
Crispi, Francesco 42
de Bono, Emilio 47
Depretis, Agostino 49
Fragnito, Giorgio 65
Giolitti, Giovanni 72
Grandi, Dino 75
Graziani, Rodolfo 75
Luzatti, Luigi 118
Martini, Ferdinando 127
Mussolini, Benito 138
Volpi di Misurata, Giuseppe 188
Austin, Texas *see* University of Texas
Australia *see* Mitchell Library (Sydney); Queensland Women's Historical Association (Brisbane)

B

Baden-Powell House (London, England)
Baden-Powell, Sir Robert Stephenson 9
BBC Written Archives Centre (Reading, England)
Cary, (Arthur) Joyce Lunel 32
Belfast, Northern Ireland *see* Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
Belgium
Antwerp *see* Archief en Museum voor het Vlaamse Cultuurleven
Brussels *see* Archives Générales du Royaume; Centre de Récherches et d'Etudes Historiques de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale; Ministère des Affaires Etrangères; Musée de la Dynastie
Tervuren *see* Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale
Berlin, Germany *see* Geheimes Staatsarchiv
Biblioteca Nacional de Espana (Madrid, Spain)
Figueras, Tomas Garcia 63
Bibliothèque de l'Ecole Polytechnique (Paris, France)
Freycinet, Charles 66
Bibliothèque de l'Institut (Paris, France)
Pichon, Stephen 150
Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris, France)
de Gaulle, Charles 48
Gallieni, Joseph 69
Mizon, Louis-Alexandre 134
Poincaré, Raymond 151
Birmingham University (Birmingham, England)
Chamberlain, Joseph 33
Eden, Sir (Robert) Anthony 57
Gwynne, Llewellyn Henry 78
Head, Antony Henry 85
Black Watch Regimental Museum (Perth, Scotland)
Cameron, Sir Archibald Rice 29
Bloemfontein, South Africa *see* Institute for Contemporary History, University of Orange Free State; South African Government Archives, Orange Free State Archives Depot
Bodleian Library (Oxford, England)
Alison, Sir Archibald 4
Brand, Robert Henry 23
Brown, A. F. 24
Cary, (Arthur) Joyce Lunel 32
Curtis, Lionel George 44
de Freitas, Sir Geoffrey Stanley 48
Dodson, John William 52
Drummond-Hay, Sir Robert 54
Gell, Philip Lyttelton 71
Gilpin, A. C. 72
Greenwood, Arthur William James (Anthony) 76
Grigg, Sir Edward William Maclean 78
Harcourt, Lewis 82
Head, Antony Henry 85
Hichens, Lionel 88
Huggins, Sir Geoffrey (Martin) 94
Lennox-Boyd, Alan Tindal 112
Loraine, Sir Percy Lyham 116
Mackenzie, Rev. John 122
Macleod, Iain Norman 123
Macmillan, (Maurice) Harold 123
Milner, Sir Alfred 133
Monckton, Sir Walter Turner 136
Nathan, Sir Matthew 139
Palmer, William Waldegrave 148
Price, Sir (Charles) Roy 153
Rennell Rodd, Francis James 159
Rogers, Sir Philip 162
Smith, George Ivan 171
Urquhart, Sir Brian 183
Wodehouse, John 194
Bonn, Germany *see* Political Archive of the Federal German Foreign Office
Border Regiment Museum (Carlisle, England)
Birkbeck, Theodore Henry 18
Botswana *see* National Archives of Botswana (Gaborone)
Brenthurst Library (Houghton, South Africa)
Crawford, Hugh 40
Bridlington Library (Bridlington, England)
Holtby, Winifred 92
Brisbane, Australia *see* Queensland Women's Historical Association
Bristol Record Office (Bristol, England)
McPherson, Joseph 132
British Library (London, England)
Baden-Powell, Sir Robert Stephenson 9
Baring, Evelyn 11
Baring, Sir Evelyn 11
Beke, Charles Tilstone 14
Bell, Sir Henry Hesketh Joudou 15
Cary, (Arthur) Joyce Lunel 32
Driver, I. S. 54
Evans, John Emrys 59
Findlay, Sir Mansfeldt de Cardonnel 63
Garrett, Fydell Edmund 70
Gladstone, Herbert John 72
Gordon, Charles George 74
Hamilton, Hubert Ian Wetherall 80
Kipling, Rudyard 105
Kitchener, Sir Horatio Herbert 106
Long, Walter Hume 116
Murray, Sir Archibald James 138
Paget, Sir Ralph Spencer 147
Palmer, William Waldegrave 148
Roberts, Sir Frederick Sleigh 160
Schnitzer, Eduard (Emin Pascha) 167
Wolseley, Garnet Joseph 195
British Library of Political and Economic Science (London, England)
Adams, Sir Walter 3
Beatty, Sir Alfred Chester 13
Bottomley, Arthur George 22
Carr-Saunders, Sir Alexander 31
Clark, Sir William Henry 35
Douglas-Home, Sir Alec (Alexander Frederick) 53
Ffrench-Beytagh, Canon Gonville Aubie 62
Firth, Sir Raymond (William) 63
Kaberry, Phyllis Mary 103
Kivu, J. M. 106
Maud, Sir John (Primatt Redcliffe) 129
Morel, Edmund Deane 136
Nadel, Siegfried Ferdinand 139
Poynton, Sir (Arthur) Hilton 153
Read, Margaret Helen 158
Schapera, Isaac 167
Webb, Sidney James 190
Brussels, Belgium *see* Archives Générales du Royaume; Centre de Récherches et d'Etudes Historiques de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale; Ministère des Affaires Etrangères; Musée de la Dynastie
Brynmor Jones Library, University of Hull (Hull, England)
Dalley, Frederick William 45
Hall, George Henry 80
Bundesarchiv (Koblenz, Germany)
Bell, Johannes 15
Bülow, Prince Bernhard von 26
Caprivi, Leo 30
Dernburg, Bernhard 50
Franke, Viktor 65
Leutwein, Paul 112
Leutwein, Theodor 112
Richthofen, Oswald von 160
Seitz, Theodor 169

C

Caernarfon Record Office (Caernarfon, Wales)
Rees, Bowen 158
California *see* Hoover Institution, Stanford University (Palo Alto)
Cambridge, England *see* African Studies Centre; Cambridge South Asian Studies Centre; Cambridge University Library; Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge University; Churchill College; Magdalene College; Pembroke College Library; Royal Commonwealth Society; Wren Library, Trinity College
Cambridge South Asian Studies Centre (Cambridge, England)
Engledow, Sir Frank Leonard 58
Cambridge University Library (Cambridge, England)
Bell, Sir Henry Hesketh Joudou 15
Cartwright, Albert 31
Casati, Gaetano 32
Corbett, Sir Vincent Edwin Henry 39
Crewe-Milnes, Robert Offley Ashburton 42
Gordon, Charles George 74
Hardinge, Sir Arthur Henry 82
Lloyd, (William) Arnold 115
Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) Museum (Lanarkshire, Scotland)
Wolseley, Garnet Joseph 195
Canada *see* Dalhousie University Library (Nova Scotia); Douglas Library, Queen's University (Kingston); Public Archives of Canada (Ottawa); Queen's College (Kingston)
Cape Archives Depot (Cape Town, South Africa)
Fremantle, H. E. S 66
Kilpin, Ralph 104
Malan, François Stephanus 124, 125
Te Water, T. N. G. 178
Cape Town, South Africa *see* Archives Départementales de l'Aude; Cape Archives Depot; Cory Library, Rhodes University; J. W. Jagger Library, University of Cape Town; Rhodes University Library; South African Library; University of Cape Town Library
Carcassonne, France *see* Archives Départementales de l'Aude
Carlisle, England *see* Border Regiment Museum
Catanzaro, provincial archive at (Catanzaro, Italy)
Colosimo, Gaspare 38
Central Archives Depot (Pretoria, South Africa)
Boydell, Thomas 23
Creswell, Frederic Hugh Page 41
Engelenberg, F. V. 58
Havenga, Nicolaas Christiaan 84
Hertzog, James Barry Munnick 87
Holloway, J. E. 91
Kemp, Jan Christofell Greyling 104
Oost, Harm 144
Strijdom, Johannes Gerhardus 175
Viljoen, C. E. 187
Central Library of Hove (Hove, England)
Miéville, Sir Walter Frederick 133
Wolseley, Garnet Joseph 195
Central Zionist Archives (Jerusalem, Israel)
Graves, Richard Massie 75
Centre de Récherches et d'Etudes Historiques de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale (Brussels, Belgium)
de Vleeschauwer, Albert 51
Centre for International and Area Studies, University of London (London, England)
Keller, Jack 103
Centre for Southern African Studies, University of York (York, England)
Barlow, H. Arthur N. 11
Bertram, Neville Rennie 16
Blanchard, Brian 19
Blundell, John 20
Brutus, Dennis 25
Chesham, Lady Marion 34
Corrigal, M. 39
de Blank, Joost 47
Duncan, Patrick 55
Fraser of Lonsdale, Lord 65
Friedmann, Marion 67
Gillett, Simon 72
Grenfell, William David 76
Hare, Judith 82
Hill, Christopher Richard 88
Kellock, Thomas Oslaf 103
Lemkin, James 111
Loch, Henry Brougham 116
Mason, Philip 128
Maude, Hugh 129
Moubray, James William 137
Palley, Claire (Dorothea Taylor) 147
Pestell, Sir John Richard 150
Scrivenor, Sir Thomas Vaisey 168
Smith, George Ivan 171
Thema, Richard Selope 178
Watts, Ronald 190
Wilson, Sir Tom Ian Findlay 194
Charente-Maritime, France *see* Archives Départementales de la Charente-Maritime
Chichester, England *see* West Sussex Record Office
Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge University (Cambridge, England)
Barnes, Sir William Letherbridge Gorell 12
Churchill College (Cambridge, England)
Churchill, Sir Winston Leonard Spencer 35
Cunliffe-Lister, Sir Philip 43
Devlin, Patrick Arthur 51
Foot, Sir Dingle (Mackintosh) 64
Gordon-Walker, Patrick Chrestien 74
Hankey, Maurice Pascal Alers 81
Lyttelton, Alfred 118
Lyttleton, Oliver 119
Macpherson, Sir John Stuart 123
Martin, Sir John Miller 127
Maudling, Reginald 129
Noble, Sir Allan Herbert Percy 141
Sandford, Sir Folliott Herbert 165
Sandys, Duncan Edwin 166
Soames, Arthur Christopher John 172
Stevens, Sir Roger Bentham 173
Stewart, Robert Michael Maitland 173
Commonwealth Studies, Institute for *see* Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London (London, England)
Connecticut *see* Yale University Library (New Haven)
Contemporary History, Institute for *see* Institute for Contemporary History, University of Orange Free State (Bloemfontein, South Africa)
Cornell University Library (Ithaca, New York)
Kipling, Rudyard 105
Cory Library, Rhodes University (Cape Town, South Africa)
Sprigg, Sir John Gordon 172
Cory Library for Historical Research, Rhodes University (Grahamstown, South Africa)
Crewe, C. P. 41

D

Dalhousie University Library (Nova Scotia, Canada)
Kipling, Rudyard 105
Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania *see* Tanzania National Archives; Tanzania University Library
Derbyshire Record Office (Matlock, England)
Gell, Philip Lyttelton 71
Deutsches Zentralarchiv (Potsdam, Germany)
Buckhka, Gerhard von 25
Konig, Bernhard von 106
Peters, Karl 150
Puttkammer, Jesco von 154
Schnitzer, Eduard (Emin Pascha) 167
Schuckmann, Bruno von 168
Dorset Military Museum, The Keep (Dorchester, England)
Law, Cecil Henry 110
Douglas Library, Queen's University (Kingston, Canada)
Grigg, Sir Edward William Maclean 78
Dreux, France *see* Maison de Maurice Viollette
Drome, France *see* Archives Départementales de la Drome
Dublin, Ireland *see* Trinity College
Duke University Library (Durham, North Carolina)
Crowe, John Henry Verinder 42
Musgrave, Sir Anthony 138
Ommaney, Sir Montagu Frederick 143
Roberts, Sir Frederick Sleigh 160
Wingate, Sir Reginald 194
Wood, Sir Henry Evelyn 195
Dundee University Library (Dundee, Scotland)
Dixon, Sir Charles William 52
Durban, South Africa *see* Killie Campbell Africana Library
Durham, England *see* Durham University; Sudan Archive, Durham University Library
Durham, North Carolina *see* Duke University Library
Durham University (Durham, England)
Arthur, Allan James Vincent 7
Gordon, Charles George 74
Grey, Sir Albert Henry George 77
Macdonald, Malcolm John 121

E

East London Museum (London, England)
Crewe, C. P. 41
Edinburgh, Scotland *see* Edinburgh University Library; National Library of Scotland; Scottish Record Office
Edinburgh University Library (Edinburgh, Scotland)
Davies, Reginald 46
Keith, Arthur Berriedale 103
Laws, Dr. Robert 110
Legum, Colin 111
Sarolea, Charles 166
England
Birmingham *see* Birmingham University
Bridlington *see* Bridlington Library
Bristol *see* Bristol Record Office
Cambridge *see* African Studies Centre; Cambridge South Asian Studies Centre; Cambridge University Library; Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge University; Churchill College; Magdalene College; Pembroke College Library; Royal Commonwealth Society; Wren Library, Trinity College
Carlisle *see* Border Regiment Museum
Chichester *see* West Sussex Record Office
Derbyshire *see* Derbyshire Record Office
Dorchester *see* Dorset Military Museum, The Keep
Durham *see* Durham University; Sudan Archive, Durham University Library
Essex *see* Essex Record Office
Falmer *see* Sussex University Library
Guildford *see* Surrey Record Office
Hove *see* Central Library of Hove
Hull *see* Brynmor Jones Library, University of Hull; Hull Library
Leicester *see* Leicestershire Record Office
Lincolnshire *see* Lincolnshire Archives Office
Liverpool *see* Liverpool Record Office; Picton Library
London *see* Baden-Powell House; British Library; British Library of Political and Economic Science; Centre for International and Area Studies, University of London; East London Museum; Fawcett Library; Foreign Office Library, Cornwall House; House of Lords Record Office; Imperial College; Imperial War Museum; India Office Library; Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London; King's College;

SUBJECT INDEX

A

Aborigines Protection Society
  Mackenzie, John 122
Abyssinia *see also* Ethiopia
  business and economy: Jevons, Herbert 99–100
  diplomacy: Beke, Charles 14; Cecil, Lord Edward 32; Hervey, Herbert 87; Hohler, Sir Thomas 90; Portal, Sir Gerald 152; Thesiger, Wilfred Gilbert 178; Thesiger, Wilfred Patrick 178
  exploration and settlement: Thesiger, Wilfred Patrick 178
  military affairs: Cecil, Lord Edward 32; Pozzolini, Giorgio 153; Rey, Sir Charles 159
  politics and government: Halpert, Frank de 80; Hector, Gordon 85; Hodson, Sir Arnold 89; Rey, Sir Charles 159; Wingate, Sir Reginald 194
  science and medicine: Rassam, Hormuzd 157
Abyssinian crisis (1936)
  Doumergue, Gaston 53
  Gill, Cecil 71
Accra riots (1948)
  Imray, Colin H. 95
African National Congress (ANC)
  Blundell, John 20
  Champion, Allison 33
  Friedmann, Marion 67
  Matthews, Zackariah 128
  Molema, Silas 135
  Msimang, Henry 137
  Thema, Richard 178
African National Council
  Hare, Judith 82
  Palley, Claire 147
African National University
  Firth, Sir Raymond 63
African People's Organization (APO)
  Abdurahman, Abdullah 3
African Resistance Movement Trials
  Sachs, Albie 165
African Rifles Mutiny (1964)
  Johnston, Peter 100
Afrikaner Bond
  Hofmeyr, Jan 89
  Malan, Pieter 125
Agadir incident (1911)
  Caillaux, Joseph 29
  Madden, Archibald 124
agriculture
  Coryndon, Sir Robert 40
  Deacon, W. H. D. 47
  Dönges, T. A. H. 52
  Downie, John 54
  Havenga, Nicolaas 84
  Izard, Henry 95
  Kemp, Jan 104
  Malan, Jacobus 125
  Martin, Eric 127
  Scott, Michael 168
  Stubbs, Ernest 176
  Swynnerton, Roger 176
  Worthington, Edgar 196
Algeria
  Catroux, Georges 32
  Godard, Yves 73
  Jonnart, Charles 102
  Kettle, Michael 104
  Lyautey, Louis 118
  Mayer, René 131
  Tubert, General 181
  Viollette, Maurice 188
American Committee on Africa
  Watts, Ronald 190
ANC *see* African National Congress
Anglo-Liberian Boundary Commission (1912)
  Hart, J. G. V. 84
Angola
  Grenfell, William 76
anti-Semitism
  Hofmeyr, Jan 90
Anti-Slavery Society
  Fox-Pitt, Thomas 64
  Greenidge, Charles 75
  Harvey, Kathleen 84
apartheid
  Blanchard, Brian 19
  Champion, Allison 33
  de Klerk, Johannes 48
  Feldman, Richard 62
  Mbata, Jeremiah 131
  Xuma, Alfred 197
Arakan campaign (1940)
  Irwin, Noel 95
Arusha-Mosi Lands Commission
  Wilson, Sir Mark 194
Ashanti (kingdom)
  Beeton, William 14
  Duncan-Johnstone, Angus 55
  Harper, Sir Charles 83
  Maxwell, Sir John 129
Ashanti Wars
  Baden-Powell, Sir Robert 9
  Fremantle, Sir Edmund 65
  Glover, John 73
  Melliss, Charles 132
  Rees, William 158
  Wilkinson, Sir Percival 192
  Wood, Sir Henry 195

B

Bantu (ethnic group)
  Ballinger, William 10
  Deacon, W. H. D. 47
  Guthrie, Malcolm 78
  Jones, John 101
  Reeves, Richard 158
Baoma disturbances (1948-49)
  Weir, Neil 190
Barclays Bank
  Daldry, Sir Leonard 45
Barolong (ethnic group)
  Molema, Silas 135
Barotseland
  Bertrand, Alfred 16
  Coillard, Francois 37
Basutoland *see also* Lesotho
  Arrowsmith, Sir Edwin 6
  Baring, Evelyn 11
  Clark, Sir William 35
  Coillard, Francois 37
  Garraway, Sir Edward 70
  Hector, Gordon 85
  Lagden, Sir Godfrey 109
  Latimer, Sir Courtenay 110
  Maud, Sir John 128, 129
  Moffat, John 135
  Richards, Sir Edmund 160
  Scrivenor, Sir Thomas 168
Basuto War
  Carrington, Sir Frederick 30
Batetela revolt
  Gillain, Cyriaque 71
  Henry de la Lindi, Josué 86
Bechuanaland *see also* Botswana
  business and economy: Jarvis, Sir Alexander 98
  exploration and settlement: Jarvis, Sir Alexander 98
  military affairs: Carrington, Sir Frederick 30; Garraway, Sir Edward 70; Grey, Sir Raleigh 77; Ponsonby, Sir John 152; Rey, Sir Charles 159
  politics and government: Baring, Evelyn 11; Clark, Sir William 35; Douglas, Arthur 53; Ellenberger, Jules 57; Garraway, Sir Edward 70; Latimer, Sir Courtenay 110; Loch, Henry 116; Maud, Sir John 128, 129; Moffat, John 135; Newton, Sir Francis 140; Rey, Sir Charles 159; Scrivenor, Sir Thomas 168; Sillery, Anthony 171; Watts, Ronald 190
  religion: Burns, James 27; Mackenzie, John 122; Moffat, John 135
Beja (ethnic group)
  Newbold, Sir Douglas 139
Benin
  Punch, Cyril 154
Benin expedition (1897)
  Rees, William 158
Berlin African conference (1884-85)
  Banning, Emile 10
  Lambermont, Auguste 109
Biafra War (1967-70)
  Clifford, Sir Miles 37
  Griffiths, James 78
  Hanbury, Harold 81
Black Sash movement
  Corrigal, Mrs. M. 39
Bloemfontein Conference
  Milner, Sir Alfred 133
Boer War (1899-1902)
  economic aspects: Biscoe, Edward 18; Colenbrander, Johannes 38; Jarvis, Sir Alexander 98; Nourse, Henry 142
  in literature and journalism: Leyds, Willene 113; Preller, G. S. 153; Unwin, Thomas 183
  military aspects: Alderson, Sir Edwin 4; Allenby, Sir Edmund 4; Ameringen, E. A. van 5; Asselbergs, C. J. 7; Burn-Murdoch, Sir John 27; Carrington, Sir Frederick 30; Charles, Sir James 34; Davel, O. A. I. 46; de la Rey, J. H. 49; Fitz-Patrick, Bernard 63; Fortescue, C. G. 64; Gibb, John 71; Grenfell, Francis 76; Hamilton, Hubert 80; Hamilton, Sir Ian 81; Hore-Ruthven, Malise 93; Law, Cecil 110; Loch, Edward 115; Lyttleton, Sir Neville 119; Mossberg, Erland 137; Muller, Christiaan 137; Nourse, Henry 142; O'Brien, Sir Charles 143; Rees, Hubert 158; Rundle, Sir Leslie 162; Sotheby, Herbert 172
  political aspects: Chamberlain, Joseph 33; Crewe, C. P. 41; Davel, O. A. I. 46; de la Rey, J. H. 49; de Souza, Louis 50; de Villiers, P. R. 50; Dönges, T. A. H. 52; Hertzog, James 87; Jeppe, Carl 99; Jooste, J. P. 102; Krause, F. E. T. 107; Leyds, Willene 113; Muller, Christiaan 137; Rodger, Sir John 161; Schoch, Herman 167; Sibbett, Cecil 170; Stoffberg, Theunis 174; Stubbs, Ernest 176; Van Broekhuizen, H. D. 185; Van Rensburg, Joseph 186; Wood, Sir Henry 195
Boer War Concentration Camp Commission
  Streatfeild, Lucy 175
Bondelzwart Rising
  Loram, Charles 117
Botswana *see also* Bechuanaland
  Gillett, Simon 72
  Hill, Christopher 88
  Mitchison, Naomi 134
  Nettelton, Gerald 139
  Schapera, Isaac 167
Boycott Movement, South African (1964)
  Kellock, Thomas 103
Boy Scout Movement
  Cusack, Henry 44
British South Africa Company
  Colenbrander, Johannes 38
  Coryndon, Sir Robert 40
  Gell, Philip 71
  Grey, Sir Albert 77
  Hole, Hugh 90
  Jameson, Sir Leander 97
  Johnston, Sir Harry 100
  Maund, Edward 129
  Michell, Sir Lewis 133
  Milton, Sir William 134
  Moffat, John 135
  Rudd, Charles 162
Broederbond (Afrikaner organization)
  Bloomberg, Charles 19
Brussels conference on Africa (1876)
  Banning, Emile 10
Brussels conference on Africa (1889-90)
  Banning, Emile 10
  Kirk, Sir John 105
Buganda
  Bleach, B. A. T. 19
  Hancock, Sir Keith 81
  Hare, William 83
  Stone, Richard 174
Buganda disturbances (1949)
  Boyd, Lachlan 23
Bulawayo, defense of (1896)
  Alderson, Sir Edwin 4
  Boggie, William 20
  Dawson, James 46
Bunyoro (ethnic group)
  Hare, William 83

C

Cairo Peace Conference (1921)
  Coote, Maxwell 39
Cameroons, British
  Bryant, H. C. A. 25
  Burns, Sir Alan 27
  Carpenter, F. W. 30
  Carr-Gomm, Mark 30
  Childs, Hubert 35
  Dalrymple, Thomas 45
  Macaulay, Herbert 121
  Phillipson, Sir Sydney 150
  Robinson, William 161
  Wyn-Harris, Sir Percy 196
Cameroons, German
  Gaisser, Karl 69
  Puttkammer, Jesco von 154
  Seitz, Theodor 168–169
  Zimmermann, Karl 201
Cameroun
  Delavignette, Robert 49
Cape Colony
  Barnett, Percy 12
  Cunynghame, Sir Arthur 43
  Hely-Hutchinson, Sir Walter 85
  Molteno, Sir John 135
  Palgrave, William 147
  Thesiger, Frederic 178
  Wodehouse, Sir Philip 194–195
Cape Coloured Commission (1935)
  Abdurahman, Abdullah 3
Cape Town (South Africa)
  Darbyshire, John 45
  de Blank, Joost 47
  Johnston, Sir Harry 100
  Thompson, Joyce 179
Capricorn Africa Society
  Bernard, John 16
  Chesham, Lady Marion 34
  Newman, Cyril 139–140
censorship
  Furness, Sir Robert 67
Central Africa *see also specific countries*
  Alston, Edward 5
  Barnes, Leonard 12
  Boyd-Moss, Lionel 23
  Cox, Arthur 40
  Dimoline, William 52
  Ingrams, William 95
  Johnston, Sir Harry 100
  Stevens, Sir Roger 173
Central African Federation
  Barlow, H. Arthur 11
  Barrow, Sir Malcolm 12
  Bertram, Neville 16
  Fox-Pitt, Thomas 64
  Heathcote, G. C. M. 85
  Kennedy, Sir John 104
  Lewanika, Godwin 113
  Paget, Edward 147
  Wilson, Sir Tom 194
Chad
  Fourneau, Lucien 64
Cirenaica
  Colosimo, Gaspare 38
  Graziani, Rodolfo 75
civil rights
  Foot, Sir Dingle 63–64
Civil Rights League, South African
  Wollheim, Oscar 195
Commission on African Higher Education
  Adams, Sir Walter 3
Comoros
  Faure, Félix 61
Conference of Governors of East African Dependencies
  Walker, Charles 189
Congo *see also* United Nations Congo Mission
  diplomacy: Asmis, Rudolf 7; Brown, A. F. 24; Casement, Sir Roger 32; Ferry, Jules 62; Forthomme, Pierre 64; Gill, Cecil 71; Gilpin, A. C. 72; Orts, Pierre 145; Pichon, Stephen 150; Urquhart, Sir Brian 183; Van der Elst, Léon 185
  exploration and settlement: Johnston, Sir Harry 100
  literature and journalism: Harris, Sir John 83
  military affairs: Alexander, Henry 4; Arnot, John 6; Gillain, Cyriaque 71; Hellberg, Carl 85; Henry de la Lindi, Josué 86; Horn, Carl Carlsson von 93; Janssens, Edouard 97–98; Mangin, Charles 126
  politics and government: Arendt, L. 6; Asmis, Rudolf 7; Banning, Emile 10; de Cuvelier, Alphonse 47–48; de Vleeschauwer, Albert 51; de Winton, Sir Francis 51; Ferry, Jules 62; Gowers, Sir William 74; Hailey, Sir William 79; Harris, Sir John 83; Johnston, Sir Harry 100; Lambermont, Auguste 109; Lebrun, Albert 111; Pedler, Sir Frederick 149; Pichon, Stephen 150; Strauch, Maximilien 175; Thys, Albert 180; Van der Elst, Léon 185; Van Eetvelde, Edmond 186; Viollette, Maurice 188
  religion: Harris, Sir John 83
  science and medicine: Henry de la Lindi, Josué 86
Congo Expedition of 1883
  Johnston, Sir Harry 100
Congo Reform Association (CRA)
  Emmott, Alfred 57
  Morel, Edmund 136
Conservative Commonwealth and Overseas Council
  Barnes, Sir William 12
Constitutional Conference of 1960 (Kenya)
  Blundell, Sir Michael 20
Constitutional Conference of 1962 (Kenya)
  Blundell, Sir Michael 20
Cyrenaica
  Ameglio, Giovanni 5
  Badoglio, Pietro 9
  Hinde, Sir William 88

D

Dakar operation (1940)
  Irwin, Noel Mackintosh 95
Darfur (Sudan)
  Messedaglia, Giacomo 132
De Beers Consolidated Mines
  Michell, Sir Lewis 133
  Rudd, Charles 162
Devlin Commission of Enquiry (1959)
  Kellock, Thomas 103
diamond industry
  Baillie, Alexander 9
  Milton, Sir William 134
  Rudd, Charles 162
Dominions Royal Commission
  Harding, Sir Edward 82
Dongola Expeditionary Force (1896)
  Kitchener, Sir Horatio 106
Durban riots
  Champion, Allison 33
Dutch Reformed Church
  Van der Merwe, Nicolaas 186
Dynamite Monopoly
  Evans, Samuel 59

E

East Africa, British
  business and economy: Dalton, Alfred 45; Gedge, Ernest 71; Phillips, Sir Edward 150
  diplomacy: Hardinge, Sir Arthur 82; Hill, Sir Clement 88
  education: de Bunsen, Sir Bernard 47; Williams, P. E. W. 193
  legal affairs: Jenkins, Sir Edward 99; Nihill, Sir Barclay 140; Polak, Henry 152; Wilson, Sir Mark 193–194
  literature and journalism: Hawtrey, Seymour 84; Saxby, David 166
  military affairs: Boyd-Moss, Lionel 23; Covell, Sir Gordon 40; Crowe, John 42; Dimoline, William 51–52; Erskine, Sir George 58; Freeland, Sir Ian 65; Henderson, Kenneth 86; Melliss, Charles 132; Platt, Sir William 151; Stewart, Sir James 173; Ternan, Trevor 177
  politics and government: Archer, Sir Geoffrey 5, 6; Blackburne, Sir Kenneth 19; Bruton, Charles 25; Cox, Arthur 40; de Winton, Sir Francis 51; Dow, Sir Hugh 53; Henn, Sir Sydney 86; Hill, Sir Clement 88; Ingrams, William 95; Orde-Browne, Sir Granville 144; Phillips, Sir Edward 150; Polak, Henry 152; Ternan, Trevor 177; Tomlinson, Sir George 180; Wall, Sir Patrick 190
  religion: Hinsley, Cardinal Arthur 89; Stewart, James 173
  science and medicine: Matson, Albert 128; Worthington, Edgar 196
East Africa, French
  Freycinet, Charles 66
East Africa, German
  Boell, Ludwig 20
  Hobley, Charles 89
  Marcus, Otto 127
  Paget, Edward 147
  Peters, Karl 150
  Schnee, Heinrich 167
  Wapshare, Sir Richard 190
East Africa, Italian
  Badoglio, Pietro 9
  de Bono, Emilio 47
  Graziani, Rodolfo 75
  Hone, Sir Ralph 92
East Africa, Portuguese
  Jerram, Sir Martyn 99
  Johnston, Sir Harry 100
  Sapte, Herbert 166
East Africa High Commission
  Sandford, Sir George 165
East African Commission
  Scott, Sir Robert 168
East African Federation
  Hone, Sir Ralph 92
East Africa Protectorate
  Girouard, Sir Percy 72
Éboué memoranda (1941)
  Henderson, Kenneth 86
Economic Institute (South Africa)
  Lombard, I. M. 116
Egypt
  business and economy: Hornsby, Sir Bertram 93; McPherson, Joseph 132
  diplomacy: Boyle, Henry 23; Brauer, Artur von 23; Cecil, Lord Edward 32, 33; Corbett, Sir Vincent 39; Crowe, Sir Colin 42; Findlay, Sir Mansfeldt 63; Fragnito, Giorgio 65; Gill, Cecil 71; Gorst, Sir John 74; Herbert, Mervyn 86; Hohler, Sir Thomas 90; Lampson, Sir Miles 109; Lorraine, Sir Percy 116; Miéville, Sir Walter 133; Paget, Sir Ralph 147; Portal, Sir Gerald 152; Rapp, Sir Thomas 157
  education: Fraser, Thomas 65; Hogarth, David 90
  legal affairs: Vaux, Sir Richard 187
  literature and journalism: Bell, Charles 14; Caminada, Jerome 29; Hoare, Geoffrey 89; Hogarth, David 90; Lumby, Christopher 118
  military affairs: Alderson, Sir Edwin 4; Alison, Sir Archibald 4; Allenby, Sir Edmund 4; Burn-Murdoch, Sir John 27; Butler, Stephen 27; Cecil, Lord Edward 32, 33; Clayton, Sir Gilbert 36; Clayton, Sir Iltyd 36; Dawnay, Guy 46; Deedes, Sir Wyndham 48; Erskine, Sir George 58; Ewart, Sir John 59; Fahrmbacher, Wilhelm 61; Hamilton, Sir Ian 81; Kitchener, Sir Horatio 106; Methuen, Paul 132; Murray, Sir Archibald 138; Talbot, Milo 177; Ternan, Trevor 177; Wolseley, Garnet 195
  politics and government: Baring, Sir Evelyn 11; Brauer, Artur von 23; Davies, Reginald 46; Furness, Sir Robert 67; Keown-Boyd, Sir Alexander 104; Macdonald, Sir